

# OKLAHOMA STATE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

**DATE:** June 30, 1999

**TIME:** 9:30 a.m.

**PLACE:** Metro Tech Conference Center  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

**PRESENT:** Ron Clark, Chairman  
Terry Peach, Farm Service Agency  
Rod Wanger, Farm Service Agency  
Jim Stiegler, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service  
Scott Stoodley, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service  
Terry Bidwell, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service  
Mike Smolen, Oklahoma State University  
Shawn Lepard, Pro Ag  
Derek Smithee, Oklahoma Water Resources Board  
Mike Thralls, Oklahoma Conservation Commission  
Ben Pollard, Oklahoma Conservation Commission  
Marla Peek, Oklahoma Farm Bureau  
Ed Fite, Oklahoma Scenic Rivers Commission  
Ray West, Tulsa Metropolitan Utility Authority  
Dick Gunn, Oklahoma Wildlife Federation  
Tricia Billingsley, Oklahoma Corporation Commission  
David Redhage, Kerr Center for Sustainable Ag  
D. Chongo Mundende, Langston University  
Judi Barrett, Broiler Producers Council  
J. D. Strong, Office of Secretary of Environment  
Jon Craig, Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality  
Ken Williams, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
John Hendrix, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation  
Steve DeMaso, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation  
Donald Black, Oklahoma Council Quail Unlimited  
Mason Mungle, Oklahoma Farmers Union  
Steven Thompson, Oklahoma Farmers Union  
Charles Freeman, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture  
Michelle Wynn, Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association  
Scott Dewald, Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association  
Vanessa Vann, Apache Tribe of Oklahoma  
Kevin Norton, Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Chris Stoner, Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Dwain Phillips, Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Shelley Hungerford, Natural Resources Conservation Service

## 1. Meeting Called to Order - Ron Clark, Chairman

Ron Clark, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. All present made introductions by stating their name and agency, organization or group affiliation. This meeting was held in compliance with the Oklahoma Meeting Laws.

## **2. State Technical Committee Membership - Ron Clark**

Ron Clark stated the Cimarron County Conservation District has expressed concerns regarding under representation of agriculture interests for western Oklahoma on the State Technical Committee and asked that we place this as an item for discussion at this meeting. Refer to letter attached from the Cimarron County Conservation District shown as Exhibit A.

Ron Clark requested the Committee to consider the current membership and whether the natural resource conservation interests and different expertise within the state are represented. J. D. Strong questioned the intent of representation at the state level by local conservation districts and suggested there would need to be a policy allowing all conservation districts representation on the State Technical Committee or none to participate. Ron Clark stated the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts has a voting member currently on the State Technical Committee, which represents the 88 local conservation districts. Kevin Norton explained the goal of the State Technical Committee is not to allow individual conservation districts to become members, but rather to have one voting member who represents the interests of all 88 local conservation districts.

The Committee had no new recommendations for membership. Ron Clark asked that members notify him if there are other agriculture or natural resource conservation interest groups, which should be represented on the State Technical Committee.

## **3. EQIP Education Assistance Activities - Kevin Norton, NRCS and Scott Stoodley, OCES/OSU**

Kevin Norton discussed the different funding sources of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). EQIP is a three-pronged program providing technical, educational, and financial assistance for natural resource conservation. He stated that funds for education assistance are being used for the purpose of providing information to educate the public about conservation techniques, which help protect the natural resources. A small percentage of funds was set aside in 1997 for education assistance in the form of cooperative agreements with the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service (OCES), Oklahoma Conservation Commission (OCC), and Langston University. In 1998, NRCS committed approximately \$100,000 for education assistance by cooperative agreement with the OCES and anticipate committing the same amount for 1999.

Kevin stated it has been a challenge to get education assistance funding out at the local level in an effective manner. During the last two years NRCS has worked with the OCES on a pay-per-product plan. NRCS agreed that the OCES could hire an individual and place them on a work plan. NRCS would reimburse the OCES for this work plan as education assistance activities are accomplished. Kevin advised that OCES hired Scott Stoodley to coordinate this effort. OCES has done a tremendous job in implementing the education assistance activities by conducting workshops and special projects on the EQIP.

Scott Stoodley stated he has been actively working since January 1999 on EQIP education assistance. The arrangements for implementing the cooperative agreement has been a very unique relationship and is not something other states have done. No other state within this region has formally developed an education assistance implementation plan as comprehensive as Oklahoma.

An overview of the education assistance activities, both completed and scheduled, was presented. Numerous workshops have been conducted throughout the state on topics such as range management, conservation tillage, and tribal. OCES has also been involved with riparian

management workshops and will be conducting several dead bird composting workshops over the next few weeks. In addition, the OCES will be working in soil quality, and ranching and farming economics. Refer to Exhibit B regarding more in-depth information on the education assistance activities conducted.

Some of the special projects are soil quality test kits, dead bird composting monitors, and prescribed fire videotapes. Also, the OCES has recently started a Web site, which will have a comprehensive listing of EQIP education assistance workshops scheduled, fact sheets and video tapes available, etc.

Scott stated that partners have played a key role in the delivery of the workshops. In addition, surveys conducted at workshops have assisted in determining the needs of the participants for future workshops. The workshops have been well attended and the participants very receptive. The emphasis has been to work in geographic locations to assist in EQIP priority areas to educate producers about conservation planning when implementing their contracts. Approximately 70% of the participation have been EQIP contract holders and 30% local interest. It was emphasized that education assistance is not intended for training on programs, new regulations or purchasing equipment.

Advertisement of these workshops was handled by placing ads in local newspapers, mailouts to EQIP contract holders, posters placed at local co-ops, etc. Terry Peach recommended that future education assistance activities be advertised in the FSA county newsletters, which have wide distribution. State Technical Committee members expressed a need to be notified about education assistance activities being offered. Scott Stoodley suggested members could access the EQIP Web site currently being developed by the OCES. A list server will be incorporated into the Web site, which will allow Committee member's access to current events and activities planned. OCES will notify Committee members when the Web site is fully operational.

#### **4. Review of EQIP Prior Year Priority Areas - Kevin Norton, NRCS**

An overview of 1997-99 EQIP Priority Areas was presented. There have been a total of 34 EQIP priority areas approved for funding. The most notable change in the last two years has been the smaller geographic size of priority areas. In addition to prioritization of priority areas, new proposals for 1998 and 1999 were selected based on water quality and animal waste environmental concerns.

Last year the State Technical Committee approved reauthorization of approved EQIP priority areas for a 3-year period. Approved priority areas will not be required to resubmit new proposals within the 3-year period, but will be required to request continuation of funding and report successes annually.

Dwain Phillips, NRCS, Public Affairs Specialist, is currently developing fact sheets which will contain success stories for each priority area. These fact sheets will be distributed to State Technical Committee members as they are completed. Input was requested from the Committee on additional information needed for the fact sheets. J. D. Strong suggested the successes should include the environmental benefits achieved from practices applied. It was agreed that this recommendation would be incorporated into the fact sheets. Refer to Exhibit C for sample fact sheets.

## **5. Review of FY2000 Priority Areas and Statewide Resource Concerns - Kevin Norton, NRCS**

Kevin Norton stated that Oklahoma anticipates level funding for the EQIP for FY2000. To date, Oklahoma ranks 8th in the nation on total EQIP funds allocated.

An overview on the role of the State Technical Committee with regard to the EQIP was presented. The primary role of the Committee is as follows:

- Selecting and ranking Priority Areas
- Selecting significant statewide resource concerns
- Guidelines for developing ranking criteria for evaluating applications
- Technical guidance on conservation practices (new and innovative technology)
- Cost-share rates, incentive payment limits and methods of payment

Kevin stated that EQIP priority area proposals for FY2000 were reviewed and evaluated by an NRCS Interdisciplinary Team on May 18-20, 1999. There were 21 new priority area proposals submitted totaling \$4 million, one reauthorization proposal for Big Pasture Priority Area totaling \$1.4 million, and 23 existing priority area proposals to be carried over to FY2000 totaling \$5.4 million. The guidelines used for ranking and selecting priority areas are as follows:

- Progress in meeting natural resource goals must be apparent in 3 to 5 years
- Identified clear threat or significant concerns relating soil, water, and related natural resources
- EQIP will be delivered in a way to maximize environmental benefits for expended program funds
- Expected program participation will be high
- Outreach and education opportunities (limited resource, small scale, minorities, and low participation communities)

Distribution of funds for statewide resource concerns has been 80 percent to priority areas and 20 percent to statewide resource concerns. Kevin reminded the Committee that amounts allocated to priority areas can be no less than 65 percent of the total state allocation and no more than 35 percent to statewide resource concerns.

Kevin stated there has been heavier participation under the soil erosion and grazing lands statewide resource concerns with a low percentage of applications actually funded. In 1999 there were 332 applications received for soil erosion with 70 funded and 433 applications received for grazing lands with 36 funded. The percentage of applications funded for statewide resource concerns for 1999 is 21 percent for soil erosion, 8 percent for grazing lands, 42 percent for fish and wildlife, and 100 percent for water.

## **6. State Technical Committee Funding Decisions for FY2000 EQIP - Kevin Norton**

- **Recommendation for distribution of funds to Priority Areas and Statewide Resource Concerns.**

*Ken Williams made a motion to retain the same allocation percentage of 80 percentage to priority areas and 20 percent to statewide resource concerns.*

Committee discussion on distribution of funds ranged from the percentage of funds allocated within the statewide resource concerns; fewer applications being received each year for

statewide resource concerns, due in part to the low percentage of funds allocated to grazing lands and soil conservation; agency personnel spending a lot of time servicing applications for statewide concerns with very few applications being funded; and the effects of riparian areas on grazing lands applications.

*Don Black seconded the motion.*

*Vote: All State Technical Committee members voted in favor of retaining the current distribution percentage of 80/20.*

- **Options for Approval and Allocation of Priority Areas**

- Will continue funding of FY1998/1999 priority areas for 1 to 2 more years (Up to maximum of three years without resubmitting.)
- Fund approved priority areas using the sliding scale approved for 1999
- Add from FY2000 Proposals those having highest merit
- Fund proposals approved for FY2000 in rank order at 100% of request
- Fund proposals in rank order at a percent of request
- Fund proposals in rank order at a percent of request with certain lower ranked proposals recommended under special consideration

Committee discussion on recommendations and selection of FY2000 proposals to be added to the existing 23 priority areas ranged from percentage of allocation available after the 23 existing priority areas are funded; specific merit of various new proposals; funding 100 percent of smaller proposals; level of participation and outreach; locally led efforts being met; and prior ground work being completed on watershed proposals.

*A recommendation was made to vote on the reauthorization of the Big Pasture Priority Area for an additional year prior to voting on the new EQIP priority area proposals.*

*Vote: All State Technical Committee members voted against funding Big Pasture Priority Area for one additional year.*

The State Technical Committee members recommended the following top ten Priority Area Proposals be voted on for FY2000 funding from the 21 new priority area proposals submitted.

- Middle Deep Run - Tillman Co.
- Sallisaw Creek - Adair, Sequoyah Co.
- Squaw Creek Watershed - Blaine Co.
- Northwest Beaver - Comanche Co.
- Mud Creek - Stephens Co.
- Lesser Prairie Chicken Habitat/Rangeland - Harper Co.
- Y2K Environmental - McCurtain Co.
- Ogallala Aquifer Water Conservation Area - Cimarron Co.
- Foss Lake Watershed - Custer Co.
- Grayson Lower Deep Fork - Okmulgee Co.

*Terry Peach made a motion to vote by ballot. Each voting member will vote for six proposals from the list of proposals recommended.*

*Mason Mungle seconded the motion. Motion passed.*

The following priority area proposals were selected from 23 ballots cast for tabulation. There was a two-way tie for sixth place.

- Middle Deep Red Run – Tillman Co.
- Sallisaw Creek – Adair, Sequoyah Co.
- Squaw Creek Watershed – Blaine Co.
- Mud Creek – Stephens Co.
- Y2K Environmental – McCurtain Co.
- Ogallala Aquifer Water Conservation Area – Cimarron Co.
- Foss Lake Watershed – Custer Co.

- **Approval of Sliding Scale for Funding Priority Areas**

Kevin Norton asked if the State Technical Committee members were agreeable to funding priority areas allocating on the present sliding scale method previously approved for 1999.

Financial Assistance <u>Request</u>	Percentage <u>Funded</u>
< \$75,000	100
\$75,000 - \$200,000	70
\$200,000 - \$500,000	65
>\$500,000	50

*Jim Stiegler made the motion to fund existing proposals using the present sliding scale.*

*Ken Williams seconded the motion. Motion passed.*

- **Allocation of FY2000 funds to New EQIP Priority Areas**

Kevin Norton asked how much should be allocated to the new FY2000 priority areas.

*Mike Thralls made the motion to provide \$300,000 to be divided between each of the new Priority Area Proposals for the first fiscal year.*

*Judi Barrett seconded the motion. Motion passed.*

## **7. Approval of Priority Resource Concerns for EQIP Outside Priority Areas for FY2000**

Kevin Norton stated the primary purpose of the statewide priority resource concerns is to assist producers in complying with environmental laws and requirements, and to address natural priority concerns.

- **Statewide Priority Resource Concern for Soil**

*Jim Stiegler made the motion to use the existing soil resource concerns as follows:*

- Excessive water erosion
- Excessive wind erosion
- Excessive ephemeral erosion
- Excessive scour erosion

*Mike Thralls seconded the motion. Motion passed.*

- **Statewide Priority Resource Concern for Water**

*J. D. Strong made the motion to use the existing water resource concerns as follows:*

- Animal Waste Disposal (nitrogen and phosphorus)
- Limited water supply
  - Irrigation
  - Livestock (Grazing Lands)
- Streambank erosion and degradation

*Mike Thralls seconded the motion. Motion passed.*

- **Statewide Priority Resource Concern for Grazing Lands**

*Mike Thralls made a motion to use the existing grazing lands resource concerns as follows:*

- Invasion of noxious weeds
- Invasion of brush
- Loss of plant diversity
- Excessive water erosion on grasslands
- Plant unsuitable for intended use

*Marla Peek seconded the motion. Motion passed.*

- **Statewide Priority Resource Concern for Fish & Wildlife**

*Ken Williams made a motion to use the existing fish & wildlife resource concerns as follows:*

- Fragmentation of habitats
- Conversion of native plant communities to introduced plants
- Loss of riparian habitat
- Loss of food and cover due to overgrazing

*John Hendrix seconded the motion. Motion passed.*

- **Recommended Allocations to Priority Resource Concerns**

*Marla Peek made a motion to change the existing percentages for priority resource concerns as follows:*

30%	Soil Resources
30%	Water Resources
30%	Grazing Lands
10%	Fish & Wildlife

*Mason Mungle seconded the motion.*

**Corrected 9/8/99**

*John Hendrix made a motion to amend the original motion as follows:*

25%	Soil Resources
20%	Water Resources
30%	Grazing Lands
25%	Fish & Wildlife

*Judi Barrett seconded the motion.*

*Vote: State Technical Committee voting members in favor of amendment to motion:*

Yes: 7  
No: 12

*Amendment failed.*

*Terry Peach made a motion to amend the motion on the floor in proportion to applications received for the statewide priority resource concerns as follows:*

40%	Soil Resources
10%	Water Resources
40%	Grazing Lands
10%	Fish & Wildlife

*Marla Peek seconded the motion.*

*Vote: State Technical Committee voting members in favor of amendment to motion:*

Yes: 10  
No: 9

*Motion passed as amended.*

- **Request to further divide the Grazing Lands Priority Resource Concerns**

*Ed Fite made a motion to further divide the grazing lands priority resource concerns as follows:*

Mesquite	70%
Eastern Red Cedar	15%
Noxious Weeds	15%

*Ray West seconded the motion.*

*Mason Mungle made the motion to amend the original motion as follows:*

Mesquite	20%
Eastern Red Cedar	40%
Noxious Weeds	40%

*Ray West withdrew second to original motion and seconded motion made by Mason Mungle.*



*John Hendrix made the motion to amend the motion on the floor as follows:*

Mesquite	20%
Eastern Red Cedar	60%
Noxious Weeds	20%

*Judi Barrett seconded the motion.*

*Vote: State Technical Committee voting members in favor of amendment to the motion:*

*Yes: 10*

*No: 7*

*Motion passed as amended.*

## **8. Approval of Ogallala Aquifer Educational Assistance Proposal**

Kevin Norton recommended the Committee vote on the approval of the Ogallala Aquifer Education Assistance Proposal for FY2000. Discussion on the approval of this proposal dealt with whether the proposal was a valid education tool. Scott Stoodley stated funds have not previously been used for purchasing equipment as outlined in the EQIP regulations, which prohibits the purchase of equipment.

*Mike Thralls made a motion to approve the educational assistance proposal submitted for the Ogallala Aquifer for funding.*

*D. Chongo Mundende seconded the motion. Motion passed.*

## **9. Approval of Additional Land to the Glover Priority Area**

*J. D. Strong made the motion to approve the request adding additional land to the Glover Priority Area Proposal for FY2000.*

*Mike Thralls seconded the motion. Motion passed.*

## **10. Addition of Conservation Practice for Whole House Cleanout Structures to the EQIP Practice List**

Kevin Norton stated there has been a request to add whole house cleanout structures to the existing EQIP practice list. The cost of whole house cleanout structures verses cakeout structures is approximately five times higher.

*Jim Stiegler made the motion **not** to approve adding whole house cleanout structures as a practice to the EQIP practice list.*

*Don Black seconded the motion.*

*Vote: State Technical Committee voting members in favor of against adding whole house cleanout structures to the EQIP practice list:*

*All voting members were in favor of not adding whole house cleanout structures to the EQIP practice list.*

## **11. Exclusion of Tall Fescue from EQIP Practice List**

*John Hendrix made the motion to exclude tall fescue from the EQIP practice list.*

*Don Black seconded the motion.*

*Vote: State Technical Committee voting members in favor of motion to exclude tall fescue from the EQIP practice list:*

Yes: 5

No: 9

*Motion failed.*

## **12. Adjournment - Ron Clark**

The meeting adjourned at 1:25 p.m.